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ABSTRACT

Bibliotek.dk is a development project, resulting in a World Wide Web site, that gives the Danish citizen access via the Internet to search and order material in the collections of Danish public and research libraries. The citizen decides himself or herself which library he or she wants to collect the material from. Bibliotek.dk is developed in connection with the change of the public libraries act into an act regarding library services. The act was passed in May 2000 and concerns both the Danish public libraries and a number of government and government-funded libraries. Major topics covered by this paper include: (1) background on DanBib (a database containing location information from public and research library collections); (2) the development from DanBib to bibliotek.dk, including the user's central position, accessibility, the library role, access to other Internet services, technology, and fees; (3) opening and use of bibliotek.dk, including the information campaign, number of requests, materials in demand, users, user expectations and wishes, and changes in the libraries; and (4) improvements for the near future. (MES)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Bibliotek.dk : Immediate access to Danish libraries - a path to follow

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Abstract:

Bibliotek.dk is a development project, resulting in a web site, which gives the Danish citizen access via the Internet to search and order material in the collections of Danish public and research libraries. The citizen decides herself which library she wants to collect the material from. Bibliotek.dk is developed in connection with the change of the public libraries act into Act regarding library services. The Act was passed in May 2000 and concerns both the Danish public libraries and a number of government and government-funded libraries.

1 Background

Denmark has a long tradition of many different forms of co-operation between public libraries and research libraries (special and scientific libraries). Interlibrary loan is essential in this context. Giving access to information on collections in the individual libraries has therefore been a central task for many years.

1.1 DanBib

In the early nineties the databases, which contained location information from the public and research libraries' collections, were combined in the database called DanBib.

DanBib is a professional tool for library staff and contains about 14 million bibliographic records consisting of:

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- Research library holdings 1981 ff., and in the case of a large number of libraries also the rest of their book stock
- A large number of public libraries' total stock of materials, books, periodicals with holdings statements, music and audio-visual materials
- The Danish National Bibliography
  - Danish Review Database 1990 ff.
  - Danish Article Database 1981 ff.
  - Danish Visual Recordings 1984 ff.
  - Danish Books 1970 ff.
  - Danish Cartographic Materials 1987 ff.
  - Danish Sound Recordings 1982 ff.
  - Danish Music 1987 ff.
  - Danish Music Recordings 1987 ff.
  - Danish Serials 1976 ff.
- Record Reviews 1984 ff.
- British National Bibliography 1981 ff.
- Library of Congress 1981 ff.
- ISSN Register (international periodicals index)
- NOSP (periodicals holdings in the Nordic countries)

The base is updated daily.

The financing of DanBib has been done partly via centrally apportioned government means, partly via user's fees dependent on use. This means that the libraries paid part of DanBib's working expenses directly dependent on use. This payments arrangement has for some time been the object of discussion and caused dissatisfaction in the libraries. It has also prevented many libraries' realisation of the desire and need to make DanBib accessible to the end user.

As the libraries' own catalogues were being opened on their homepages, there was an increasing demand for DanBib to be opened to the end user.

1.2 Act regarding library services

A change in the public library act has been under way since the mid-nineties. As part of this preparatory legislative work the Danish minister for culture, Elsebeth Gerner Nielsen chose to put forward the political wish/claim that DanBib were to become accessible to all Danish citizens on the Internet, not only with a search but also an ordering facility.

Soon the proposal won general approval which meant that the Danish National Library Authority was entrusted – with the Danish Library Centre in the role of developer – to create a *popular edition* of DanBib, accessible on the Internet and with an ordering facility available from the start: the 'DanBib for All' project.

2 From DanBib for All to bibliotek.dk

A project group consisting of representatives of those who had commissioned DanBib: The Danish Government, represented by the Danish National Library Authority, the National Association of Local Authorities, Copenhagen and Frederiksberg metropolitan authorities and the Danish Library Centre was established. The National Library Authority was appointed project manager and the Danish Library Centre, in charge of the operational procedures of DanBib, was to take on the task of developer.

January 1999 saw the first tentative steps being taken towards the realisation of the project. A seminar was arranged for an invited circle of Danish interested parties. It was important at the seminar to look at

concrete information from our Nordic sister countries on the current situation regarding the end users access to the respective countries' common catalogues. One end user was invited to present his views on which expectations and demands one might have in relation to collective access to the Danish libraries' collections.

2.1 Development project bibliotek.dk

Based on what had emerged at the seminar, development work started in earnest. A discussion paper on DanBib for All was produced, and in May/June more than 400 library members of staff participated in two open meetings about the project. Work on demarcation and content in the base which were to become accessible in bibliotek.dk, development of user interface and the preparatory legislative work went hand in hand, and in January/February 2000 the comparatively concise outlines of bibliotek.dk were submitted for discussion to more than 900 library members of staff at four country-wide meetings.

2.2 The user's central position

In the development of bibliotek.dk, the attention has focused on the end user. User interface as well as content have all the way been intended to live up to the requirements and expectations of the user. The Danish Library Centre, together with the web bureau, Araneum, which was to develop the user interface, therefore chose almost straight away to attach a user panel to the development project. From the beginning it was decided to develop the user interface under the assumption that the user had a minimum of knowledge of how to use PC and Internet and a minimum of knowledge of libraries. As far as age was concerned we decided to assume that bibliotek.dk could be used by children from about 10-12 years old. On the basis of this, user panels were selected, partly to outline the requirements to user interface and search facilities. The panels consisted of people of different ages, people in employment, unemployed people, pensioners, women and men. The end user's - and not the professional user's (the librarian's) - wishes and demands in relation to the system has therefore been the most important aspect.

2.3 Accessibility

The fundamental idea has all along been that bibliotek.dk must be accessible to everyone. A user interface in English has therefore been developed and the page has also been tested with a view to accessibility for the visually impaired.

2.4 bibliotek.dk contains the following:

- Localisations from nearly every public library and public research library in Denmark
- The Danish National Bibliography, cf. content of the DanBib database.

This means that one can search on all registered books, periodicals, CD-ROMs and other materials, acquired in Danish libraries. There is a total of about 6-7 million titles, covering several million materials.

2.5 Libraries

The bibliotek.dk concept stresses the fact that it is the individual user who chooses the material he/she wants and also the place of collection, i.e. the library where the user wants to pick up the actual, ordered material.

So it is the library system in general which in the most rational and economical way makes sure that the material ordered, is procured for the place of collection, in case the library chosen as place of collection does not itself hold the material in question.

Each library determines its own service profile within the frames of the library act. This means i.a. that music materials, CD-ROMs etc. belong to the group of obligatory material, which will not be included in the interlibrary loan co-operation until after 1 January 2003.

It also means that the individual library in bibliotek.dk has described in quite precise terms the service, which is offered to the user. Questions about searching and description of books, periodicals, music etc. as well as assistance in using bibliotek.dk must therefore be directed at the individual user's local library. Questions about the individual request must be directed at the library, which the user has chosen as place of collection.

The participating libraries are listed in *Biblioteksvejviseren*, which is an index of all the public libraries that want to be visible in bibliotek.dk

2.6 Access to other net services

A number of Danish libraries have individually - or together - developed a number of net services. The services, which are of a national character, are included with links on bibliotek.dk

2.7 Technology

The Danish libraries' technological co-operation has right from the start been built on open international standards, which are only to a limited extent adapted to Danish conditions. The DanBib base is thus built on standardised modules which are immediately compatible with the library systems that build on standards which are on the Danish market.

In the development of bibliotek.dk no particular technological demands were placed on the participating libraries. Existing library systems were, therefore, supposed to be able to be used without further immediate technological requirements and subsequent economic consequences.

As is the case of the general development of the Danish library system, bibliotek.dk has been built up piece by piece, module by module. The intention has never been at the theoretical level to develop a complete, closed product – on the contrary – the development is process orientated and continuous.

With present technology it is not possible to show loan status in bibliotek.dk. But via bibliotek.dk it is possible to change to the individual library's catalogue in order to find the information wanted. It has been a question of choice here, as technology and implementation of for example Z39.50 for holdings registration is not yet established in Denmark, but the first implementations are expected in the autumn.

2.8 Fees or no fees

In connection with the passing of *Act regarding library services*, the question of a small fee for the use of bibliotek.dk was discussed. Initially there was in fact a suggestion included of charging a fee of DKK 5,00 (just over ½ USD) per request.

The result of the deliberations was that *Act regarding library services* now contains a clause to the effect that following negotiations with relevant parties, the minister for culture may decide that the libraries must charge a fee for the ordering of materials ordered in bibliotek.dk. The services, which are at present available in the libraries, are in principle free of charge for the end user.

3 Opening and use

Bibliotek.dk was opened at the National Library Authority's annual meeting with the Danish library directors on 31. October 2000 by the Danish Minister for Culture Affairs. On this occasion a short press release was issued, and a rather informal meeting with the press was arranged, but all in all not a lot of effort was spent on presenting this unique new service to the Danish citizens. This strategy was quite deliberate, as even though bibliotek.dk had been thoroughly tested all the way through, we still could not really predict how the system would actually work in practice. We have witnessed too many launchings in Denmark of new, spectacular IT-projects, which were not able to live up to expectations once they went into operation.

Bibliotek.dk went on the air – and stayed there!

3.1 Information campaign

In the spring of 2001 we conducted an information campaign about *Act regarding library services*. A major part of the campaign concentrated on bibliotek.dk. The campaign consisted of:

- Banner advertisements on selected web sites
- A competition with questions to be solved in bibliotek.dk
- door-to-door distributed postcards
- Chilicards (postcards displayed in educational institutions)
- GoCards (postcards displayed in cafés etc.)
- ½ mil. leaflets to the libraries

3.2 Use

And how much has bibliotek.dk been used up till now?
As anticipated the number of requests made when bibliotek.dk opened was not very impressive. During the first month in operation, i.e. November 2000, a total of just over 16,600 requests were made, distributed on 14,000 placed with the public libraries and about 2,000 requests with the research libraries.

In April 2001 there was a total of about 38,500 requests, distributed with just over 33,000 at the public libraries and just under 5,000 at the research libraries.

The figures for the entire period since bibliotek.dk opened are: more than 127,000 requests, 108,500 at the public libraries and about 18,000 at the research libraries.

3.3 What has been particularly in demand?

No actual study has been carried out as to what the user has been ordering. But all the public libraries agree that music CDs and materials from the research libraries are being asked for. Random samples show that ILL from research libraries to the public libraries has increased considerably. Apart from that quite ordinary requests are received for quite traditional material.

3.4 Who use bibliotek.dk

We have no statistics for this, but the immediate reaction from the libraries is that students at all levels are frequent users. This hardly comes as a surprise.

3.5 User expectations and wishes

As will appear from what I have already said, it is quite obvious that we have tried to meet the users' needs during the development of the project. Although in the early stages it turned out to be quite difficult to get the users to actually consider what they would want when suddenly faced with the possibility of gaining access to all the library collections in Denmark.

I should just like to mention a couple of our users' reactions:

Great!!! I haven't tried to order any books yet, but if you keep your promises, well then this is a truly brilliant tool.
I have tried a couple of different searches, and am impressed. It works very well!

Thanks for the postcard: These site it the best thing to come out of the public sector for a very long time.

I have been wondering for a long time whether it wouldn't be possible to search in a common library database.

And now it is – and you can even order the materials at the same time.

It is simply PERFECT!

To put it briefly – bibliotek.dk is "a place where one seeks (searches) – and finds answers"!

3.6 Changes in the libraries

What then are the consequences for the libraries?
Without a doubt bibliotek.dk has increased the number of requests in the libraries – and this is particularly true in the case of the public libraries. What the result will be as regards for example an increase in loans and interlibrary loans we can only say for certain when we have the statistical figures for 2001.

But one thing is absolutely certain – the traditional materials such as books, periodicals etc. will for many years to come remain central in Danish libraries. In the further development of bibliotek.dk the emphasis will therefore be on processing and executing so-called user initiated interlibrary loan requests as rationally and economically as possible.

4 Perspectives

My view of the future is that the bibliotek.dk we know today is just the beginning. The web page will be developed in co-operation with all relevant parties in Denmark, but it would be unwise at this stage to try to predict the final scope for bibliotek.dk

All development initiatives will be based on improved service to the user. Right now the following definite improvements are imminent:

- Development of a better interplay between local library system and bibliotek.dk
- Development – in co-operation with publishers and booksellers – of a 'purchase' button, i.e. a link to the possibility of buying from booksellers both on the net and from local bookshops
- Improved subject search
- Integrated search in physical materials and registration of Internet resources collected from net services.

And much more.

Improvements and rationalisations for the libraries will obviously be high on the agenda. Both in bibliotek.dk and in DanBib which is still the professional tool of library staff.